

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR MINORITY STUDIES AND
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MACEDONIA
A YEAR AFTER THE ETHNIC CONFLICT:
THE DISINTEGRATION OF SOCIAL FABRIC

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Research Methodology

The team consisted of six members, each with interdisciplinary training and a specific approach to fieldwork and interviewees: a historian and Balkan studies scholar, an ethnologist-anthropologist, a historian anthropologist, an oriental studies linguist, a journalist, and an interpreter- mediator.* The researchers worked both in a team and individually with persons of different social and age groups and in different localities.

The survey was carried out between 18 and 23 March 2002, with the kind support of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, as the successive stage of IMIR's three-year long research cycle devoted to the crisis in former Yugoslavia, to the fate and future of Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Albania, and Montenegro in the context of the Albanian national question. The scholars applied the method of anthropological interviews, as well as an adapted and authorized system of questions for semi-standardized sociological interviews and observations. Content-analysis of the daily and weekly press, and of some TV and radio programmes, was made in the course of the expedition. Furthermore, data from some official municipal records were systematized.

The aim of the survey was to take a snapshot of the social and political situation in Macedonia, as well as of the respective psychological state of the two major ethnic communities – the Macedonians and the Albanians.

The team focused their attention on intracommunity relations, political rivalries and conflicts, as well as on the different, sometimes mutually exclusive, visions of Macedonia's future.

As usual, this informal survey probed into the stereotypes and attitudes regarding the involvement and role of the external factors in the unfolding of the conflict, its localization and discontinuation, as well as the part played by the European Union and the United States at present and in the implementation of the Ohrid agreement.

The investigation was conducted in Tetovo, Gostivar, Skopje, Kumanovo, Veles, and Strumica; interviews with commanding officers from the National Liberation Army (NLA) were taken in a motel in the village of Rechica near Tetovo.

The respondents numbered about 50 persons aged 20-60, both males and females, from different educational backgrounds. Predominating among the social groups were members of the political elite, political scientists and experts, journalists, representatives of the military and policemen. As always, the interviewees were randomly chosen: citizens, countrymen, workers, people engaged in the services and the trade sector, office employees.

Psychological characteristics of the Macedonian and the Albanian communities

In June 1999, immediately after the end of NATO's air-raids, in our regular analysis following a field study in the refugee camps in Macedonia, we pointed out the "striking discrepancy in the emotional and psychological attitudes of the two major ethnic communities – the Macedonians and

¹ Macedonia: A Year After the Ethnic Conflict is a chapter from the book *Urgent Anthropology* Vol.2. *The Albanian Prospects*. Antonina Zhelyazkova. IMIR, Sofia, 2003.

the Albanians.” (Zhelyazkova, A. The Albanian National Problem and the Balkans, 2001, pp. 60-63). In 2002, in consequence of the ethnic conflict that had made the worst expectations of the Macedonians come true, the psychological and emotional distances between the two communities acquired dramatic dimensions.

Macedonians as victims. The great majority of the Macedonians live in a catastrophic state of mind and keep on building up fear, suspicion, and hatred. They feel doomed and futureless as individuals, as a family, as a nation and a state. On this soil, new myths are burgeoning about the extraordinary cruelty of the Albanians, along with the demographically horrifying myth about the Albanians’ directed and unprecedented birthrate.

As might be expected, these rumours are most common in the ethnically pure regions that are far from Albanian-populated areas, often in places where people not only have not lived together with Albanians, but have not even met any Albanian. A young female respondent from Strumica reported that when coming home from Western Macedonia on furlough, local women’s husbands, serving in the “Lions” supplementary police forces, told shocking stories about victimized Macedonians that had been maltreated in the most brutal way. Seeing the incredulity in our eyes as regards these frightening accounts, she tried to persuade us that the television had shown more than once footage of this kind.

In one of Macedonia’s southeastern towns our research team visited all possible souvenir shops and bookshops, looking for a flag of the Republic of Macedonia. We found no flag anywhere, but the tour gave us an opportunity to have quite interesting discussions with the people in the shops, the mood varying from utter despair with the bleak future looming before their state to bitter self-irony: “What do you need a Macedonian flag for, Bulgarian brothers, just wait a bit and see - there’ll be no such flag at all, because there’ll be no state of Macedonia either.” Or “It would be smarter of you to get a Shkiparian flag”, or “We are looking for a Bulgarian flag while you are going about searching for a Macedonian one...” In the long run, having put much effort and perseverance in visiting almost every place in town and finding ourselves in a small and neatly looking bookshop, we complained to the shopkeeper that all our efforts to get a flag had been in vain. Confused by the lack of patriotism in her native town, the shopkeeper went behind the counter and took out a faultlessly laid out copy of the “Map of Macedonia” printed along the line of a programme of the Macedonian *narodniks*, populists, drawn by Pavle Chupovski in 1913: it was a map well-representative of the ideas of Greater Macedonia.

The supplementary police forces known as the “Lions” are an emanation of the deep depression of Macedonian society. They are volunteers, men between 30 and 50 years old, dressed in camouflage fatigues, armed with automatic Kalashnikovs and also equipped with unidentified amounts of ammunitions and all kinds of small arms. The Macedonian government has found resources to pay each of these soldiers a monthly salary of 500 Euro thus achieving a multiple effect. On the one hand, it eases the tension caused by the nation’s high, nearly 45 per cent, unemployment; on the other hand, it has at its disposal militant armed troops that are ready to violate the law, when necessary. According to an interviewed military observer, “they number about 1600 men, their units formed on a municipal basis – in Kumanovo, Gostivar, Kicevo, Tetovo...” We asked our interlocutor, expert on military matters: “Is it true that Bulgaria has supplied the Macedonian army with faulty ammunitions, for the Macedonians keep blaming us in our conversations?” It was with interest that we listened to our respondent making a commentary on the situation from a military point of view: “It’s a very weak army – in order to kill 50 terrorists they had to fire tons of charges – they must have needed a ton of ammunitions to kill a single Albanian warrior. The Albanians have shown them what the art of war is... their pride, it has been smitten by the “Tigers”, they captured five or six armoured vehicles, two or three tanks. So don’t you listen to all this nonsense about their weapons being faulty”.

Outwardly, the “Lions” are like any members of a typical demoralized, defeated army. Slovenly, unshaved, smelling of alcohol. Each detachment has a force of 10 men who, in the course of 12 hours a day, keep guard on strategic roads and sites, in the towns and villages with ethnically mixed population.

In Strumica, we rode in a taxi where the overwrought driver, after reacting with threats to all our questions about the Albanians, changed the subject switching over to politics. Our question about “which party is going to win the elections this autumn” received the following answer: “Don’t ever doubt it would be Ljubco’s VMRO-DPMNE – the patriots.” There was scepticism on the part of the passengers: “This party has been discredited too much, the premier himself too, because of corruption, because of the concessions made in the Ohrid agreement?” The reply: “It doesn’t matter. The Macedonians know who the true patriots are in this country. “The “Lions” will intervene and everybody will know what ballot they have to cast in the ballot-box” our interlocutor summed up threateningly

The intention of the “Lions” to assist by force in the coming elections was confirmed by themselves, too. Our respondents from among the “Lions” invited us to their table, where they were drinking right before mounting guard during which they would go on drinking, because each one of the troop invariably carried along with him a 250ml plastic bottle full of his homemade brandy to be tasted by the rest of the company... And on the other day - after coming off duty - it would be beer... So they went on day after day, month after month, without ever becoming absolutely sober. They were brimming over with aggression, brandishing their charged automatic rifles with the safety-catch on and making fierce threats “to teach the Albanians a lesson”. Their favourite subjects of discourse were the “white slaves, Bulgarian women including, who prostitute themselves with the Albanians, because these guys are rich”, their own sexual achievements and reveries, and, of course, the heroic accounts about how they had fought against the Albanians last spring and during the summer.

We became friends with one of them in particular and realized that under the hypertrophied forms of machismo, behind the endless cursing, there was an desperately frightened man who was not sure at all whether he was able to protect his family, his elder sister, or his native place. Wishing to explain the complicated situation in Macedonia and in his native town of Kumanovo more clearly, he made a parallel: “There are only four churches in the town and many Albanians. They’re like the Turks for the Bulgarians.” A research team member protested: “We get along with our Turks in Bulgaria quite well”. The interviewee became thoughtful and noted: “That’s true, when I was in Germany, I got acquainted with Turks from your country. When you ask him, he says: I’m a Bulgarian Turk. Bulgarian! Damn it! And our fellows: Albanian! They won’t accept anything else.” He was so deeply hurt by everything that was happening in Macedonia that he preferred to turn the conversation back to the battles of last summer – he had fought at Vaksintzi.

The gloomiest and most embittered police patrols were those in Tetovo. When we tried to engage them in conversation, they drove us away with a threatening look, having meanwhile realized where we were going – to the Bektashi tekke. It was the site of last year’s skirmishes – at one moment it was NLA’s headquarters, at another a coordinating centre of the Macedonian army and police. Although for a long time the tekke had been occupied only by its sheikh and his close dervishes, the myths spread the word that it was still the home of terrorists

We asked a minister /an ethnic Macedonian/: “The “Lions” are dangerous with their demoralization, drunkenness and also because they are armed. They are a threat to peace. Are you going to disband them as the international community demands?” His reply: “Macedonia is not going to cut anything. The Macedonian security forces, the “Lions”, have not been formed for theatrical performances, but in a time when Macedonia needed help and her own force. They helped us defend Macedonia’s sovereignty.” A question to a Deputy Minister /an ethnic Albanian/: “We talked to the paid policemen of the reserve and they were threatening: “wait and see, in May

or June we begin the revenge!” You in the government, cannot rely on chance that these weapons wouldn’t fire off?” His reply: “We have created individual armed units, intended to serve the state, and it turns out that in some way they are a threat to all citizens. Every day there are reports about incidents of aggression, of Macedonians killed and of Albanians maltreated. People are scared, not daring work in the fields, and it’s spring now. We are further away from war than last year, but we are not far enough yet in order to avoid the risk of a new war.”

In Kumanovo there are 750 displaced persons – Macedonian and Serb Orthodox Christians, who live in three local hotels. Resident in the “Crystal” Hotel are 162 people; almost all the Serbs from the village of Matejce are in this hotel. They deserted their houses on 3 May 2001 and have no place to go back to, because their homes had been destroyed. They are given free meals in the hotel, but no financial aid. Said a young female respondent: “There’s no hope for us, this is a sold out state. The police tell us they’re not able to give us protection. The government doesn’t care about us.” An elderly woman broke in: “Bulgarians are our kin, it’s they we must rely on...” A young male respondent interrupted her: “Bulgarians want half of Macedonia...” The old woman started telling us how back in 1941 she went to school and studied Bulgarian for two years: “It’d be better if Bulgarians take us, not Albanians...” Another respondent told his story: “We used to live quite well with the Albanians, we respected each other. When all that happened in Kosovo, my neighbour Farush, the shopkeeper, told me that should something happen here in Macedonia: you’ll be on your side, and me – on mine.”

The argument among the Serb refugees about who could help was renewed: “US supports the Albanians, there’s colossal pressure on the government by Washington. Yet, it’s the Bulgarians who know how to fix the Albanians, so that they, the *Shkiptari*, go home to Albania within twenty four hours...” A young Serb cut in: “Macedonia must get help from Serbia, not from Bulgaria”. Angry respondents interrupted him: “You’re all too young to give advice. The only thing the *Shkiptari* know of is Bulgarian thrashing...” The women keep pictures of their homes, and of the Orthodox church-house in the village on the walls of which you can see KLA graffiti. Their own houses were destroyed on 21 September, at present there are only ethnically mixed patrols there, but the people commented: “Puppets on a string, dummies. They’d walk only the main street, but dare not set foot in any of the other quarters. It’s all over with us there. They’ve destroyed the gravestones too – only ten are left now, and there were 2000 tombstones of our ancestors”. The women began lamenting the devastation of the tombstones, for they are symbols – the Orthodox faith has been erased from the village. A refugee respondent, who had been to that village together with OSCE representative said: “Twelve-fifteen year-old *Shkiptari*, just kids, would shout at me: go along, you have no business here any more, get out! And the church – it’s charred by the fire, nothing is left inside!”

Having given up all hope of returning to their homes, the displaced people discussed with unconcealed resentment the corruption in the government and the involvement of the Prime Minister and his family in some illegal transactions.

Segregation. The separation and the silent confrontation of the two communities can most clearly be felt in the capital city of Skopje. Situated on the left bank of the Vardar River are the Albanian neighbourhoods, and on the right – the Macedonian ones. On one side of the bridge the language primarily spoken is Macedonian, on the other – Albanian. It strikes us that here, much more often than in Tetovo, the Albanian women are dressed in strict conformity with the Muslim tradition – long grey gowns and headscarves. We asked one of the Albanian politicians: “This contradicts logic, how come, women in the capital city dressed in a much more conservative way than in the provincial town of Tetovo, or in Gostivar, where we can see some women wearing fashionable clothes”? Answer: “In the western part of Macedonia the battle fought for dominance is over. We Albanians have won and this is obvious to everybody. Now the struggle is being waged for

cultural and political domination in Skopje; this requires demonstrativeness, and so women become part of it in their own way by wearing the traditional dress.”

In the evening Skopje looks like a dead city – people on the central streets are few, the old marketplace is deserted. Empty are the restaurants and cafes. Both ethnic Albanians and Macedonians are at their homes, because they are fearful. All the people in the capital city are frustrated because they feel their problems have not been definitively resolved. Something is imminent, but it is all beyond the citizen’s control. It deprives the city’s population of the possibility to think about their future. The Macedonians feel they have been losing their statehood, have been vanquished, and the document signed in Ohrid is betraying their national interests. An interviewed ethnic Albanian politician summed it up: “Common among the Macedonians is the attitude of engaging in another battle so that they could come off victorious. Still, I’m optimistic, because I can compare the levels of intracommunity and intercommunity hatred in the territory of former Yugoslavia and I know for certain that in Macedonia it is much less stronger and that these sentiments are only temporary”.

A Macedonian political scientist told us: “If we want to be objective, it’s not only the Macedonians who are seething with angry frustration because they were not allowed to “fix” the Albanians. The more radically-minded Albanians have also been challenged, because they believe they’ve missed a good chance for Macedonia to be declared a binational state”.

Our team, however, did not notice any elements of frustration among the ethnic Albanians. On the contrary, witnessed among them were all the characteristics of a national upsurge - enthusiasm and exalted expectations of the future. Unlike Skopje, where life is muted and hushed, because both sides feel the city to be the major scene, the centre of political, ideological and cultural rivalries, the place where you can find representatives of the international community, ambassadors, mediators and, in general, all those who make the decisions and predetermine the future, the provincial towns and villages with prevailingly Albanian population, are seething with life. All day long and well into the night, quite untypical of the provincial way of life, the urban areas are busy, the restaurants and cafes are full of visitors, joyful and noisy groups of young people stroll the main street and crowd the discotheques.

We interviewed two ethnic Albanians from Gostivar who attended customers in a fashionable downtown café, which worked as a discotheque at night. Our observations found confirmation in what they said: in Macedonia there is segregation everywhere in the infrastructure related to people’s everyday life, although the term itself is mentioned on no occasion and by no one. Question: “Are the discotheques in the town crowded in the evening and what is their number?” Answer: “There are two discotheques in town – ours, and the Macedonian one. But theirs has not been working lately, they’ve closed the place. They [the Macedonians] are in no mood to have fun, and their parents won’t let them go out.” Question: “Don’t you get together in the discotheques? Now that their place is closed, don’t the Macedonian youths come to your discotheque? Answer: “We used to visit their discotheque from time to time, but they never came to ours. Nor do they come now. We don’t visit theirs either”.

As an effect of this emotional revivalist spirit, most clearly felt in Tetovo, we noticed a striking change in this city – opened were as many as 5 bookshops. We were thrilled, because in 1999 we were surprised to establish that no single bookshop functioned in this urban area. So, we rushed to follow on the track of this innovation.

The bookshop in the downtown square of Tetovo was jammed with literature in almost no other language but Albanian, the most common publications being specialized theological texts devoted to Islam, interpretations of Koranic texts, epistles of shari’ah dogmas, etc. Amidst these rather specific writings we caught sight of the *Kanun of Leka Dukagjin* in a Macedonian translation. It was a 1994 edition, but we saw it in a bookshop for the first time. Our interest in this publication impressed the shop assistants, two young men, and, with proud satisfaction, they wrapped up two

copies saying the books were a gift from the establishment presented on account of the interest shown in this particular piece of reading. On complaining that we had been looking for fiction and poetry by Albanian authors in Macedonian translations in vain, they directed us to the other two bookshops.

We found a street where side by side were two bookshops – one Albanian, under the name of “Rilindja” /Revival/, and the other one, Macedonian – named “Culture”. We went into the Macedonian bookshop and asked: “Have you got works by Albanian authors, fiction or poetry, in Macedonian?” The shop-assistants’ polite-looking faces stiffened and the lady replied sternly: “There are no Albanian authors here, we have only Macedonian, Serbian, and European literature”. We loudly voiced our disappointment and complained that we could find nowhere what we had been looking for. The shop-assistants added grimly: “Then why didn’t you go to the bookshop next door, it’s Albanian”. The literature available in the adjacent bookshop was scarce and all of it was in Albanian, so we could find nothing suitable. We did find out one thing – the segregation was all too obvious and demonstrative. Later on, a member of the team went back to the Macedonian bookshop and conducted lengthy interviews with the people in the bookshop: They worked for as much as 20 Euro a month and felt wronged and bitter about their own lives and misery, and about Macedonia’s misfortune. A respondent shared his opinion with the interviewer in a dramatic tone: “Macedonia is honey and blood”.

Confessions of two Macedonian respondents from Tetovo: “The taxi cabs are their property, the slick cars and the jeeps are their property, in this shopping street only this bookshop is owned by Macedonians, everything else is owned by Albanians! Just look at them, they’ve stuck up flags as high as two metres; if it’s schools – they’ve got them, they’re taught in Albanian, they have their universities, and their own local government, too. All the world rushed to defend them, to weep for them. And what about the devastated Macedonian villages, what about the killed? And now, the Albanians who were involved in the war last year, have been given amnesty, they are given back their previous jobs and they’ll be paid for the time when they had been in the woods, not at their workplaces. And we are obliged to welcome them. I suppose we have to thank them as well. We are a minority in our own state. There are no jobs, there’s no money. The only way out is to get in the *shverts*, but the Albanians have taken hold of the *shverts* too – all of them are in it. They have many children, their religion is like that, and their policy too. In my village, the Albanians have become twice as many. My peers married at 17, at 34 they became grandparents. You can make the reckoning yourself - for a hundred years they have produced six generations, we only three. Make your own reckoning!” Question: “You have been living side by side for centuries, what is it that divides you so deeply”? The confession continued: “Yes, we live together, but I know that he’s wishing me ill. And me? I’m wishing him the same! But they use to help one another, and we don’t do that. In the devastated villages... well, we are on the watch for anyone that might emerge from the situation. We envy one another.”

Segregation is witnessed at the university in Tetovo as well. The former illegal Albanian university is now lawful, but it keeps recruiting students from among the Albanians alone. The chancellor is a radical, quite alien to any academic standards, and, in the opinion of both Macedonian and Albanian respondents, “the level of education is like that in an elementary village school, even worse”. The Albanians in Tetovo take pride in the Southeastern European University, which was founded through the mediation of Van der Stuij and is financed by the EU. The teaching languages in it are Albanian, Macedonian and English. Young interviewees showed us around the campus situated at the city’s end and looking more like a youth summer camp with its prefabricated little houses painted in light colours. We were told the sheds had been built for several weeks only under the supervision of the international forces and with their help too, with the idea that when the apple of discord – the Albanians’ education – is eliminated – peace will maybe set in. For the present, it is just another segregation site and nothing more.

Most obvious in everyday life is the segregation in restaurants, cafés, pastry shops and stores – i.e. all places of people's everyday contacts and dealings. Especially sad is what you see among children and young people, because the elders, who have permission by their parents to go out with their friends and visit such places, would definitely do that on an ethnic principle and visit the same cafes that are frequented by their parents.

The Albanians between Islamism and Albanianism. We asked one of the ethnic Albanian senior political leaders: "It seems there is a tangible re-clericalization of the Albanians and the Macedonians after the conflict? In the bookshop we saw plenty of theological literature on Islam. How will this tendency develop in the future? Answer: "This is rather an internal Albanian problem. Should Albanianism prevail, our prospective development will follow the example of Albania and Kosovo. You can't see women in traditional dress in Kosovo, much less in Albania, because the Albanians' self-assurance is really strong. In Macedonia the Albanian spirit is frail, because all Macedonian energy has been used to smother this spirit. As a result, there is a tendency among the Albanians to reformulate the intracommunity integration and mobilize through the Islamization of the Albanians."

The interviewers broadened the theme: "Doesn't this trend scare you, especially after September 11? Weren't you one of the ideologists of the Albanian modernization and Europeanization"? The respondent agreed making the following comment: "Of course, I'm scared, because we are moving on the razor's blade at a time when this conflict may well reappear with a new, religious, dimension. We have abundant Muslim literature available, because our money comes from the Islamic world – we have no funds to translate or publish secular books, and the Islamic countries finance lavishly only theological writings". Question: "Have you any platform, any ideas how to avoid the risk of infiltration of fundamentalism"? Answer: "My philosophy is that we should rapidly advance to a thorough Albanianization, which is an instrument of Europeanization. The paradox with us is that with the help of Albanianism we have become a regional power, and through Islamization we have been globalized and can be drawn into the sphere of global problems".

The conversation grew more and more important, for we could clearly feel there was a conceptual dispute among the Albanian elites regarding the choice of their future way of development, now we were listening to one of the prospects open before the Albanians in the Balkan region. We went on asking absolutely blunt questions: "What do you mean by Albanianization – is it the completion of the process of formation of national consciousness"? Our respondent, who beside being a politician was also a philosopher, elaborated on the subject quite earnestly, for he was obviously seeking to elucidate the conception even to himself: "I'm speaking frankly about the fact that Albanianism will develop and we'll be compatible not only with the Balkan nations, but also with the European context. What we need most is to be in harmony with ourselves – with the Albanians from Albania and from the other Albanian territories, no matter whether they are Orthodox Christians, Catholics or Muslims. Don't be superior – we have a stronger national feeling than the Macedonians, than the Serbs, than the Bulgarians. The problem we have to solve is not one of strength of national identity, but rather of the Albanians' "being what": what Albanians we are, what we want to be. We want to create a European aspect of Albanianess".

We could discern our interlocutor's emotions, we recognized almost the same words said by Sami Frasheri in 1899 in his book "Albania – what it was, what it is, and what it will become", urging the Albanians to seek independence within the broadest possible ethnic boundaries and most of all go after modernization as the only way to achieve their national aspirations. As to the obstacles in this striving, they were articulated in 1900 by his relative, M. Frasheri: "In order for a nation to say it is alive, it should be united, it should have its own language, be civilized, because staying

primitive, uncivilized and illiterate as it is, it will not last long. In order to live, we should become civilized.” /M. Frasheri.../

We tried not to miss the moment: “But what does a European aspect of Albanianess and of Albanians mean – their modernization, a lower birthrate, tearing away from the traditional patriarchal tradition and the clan system? Will the system of intra-clan assistance survive”? Answer: “We are quite clear that where Albanian institutions are lacking, religion comes instead, and family support too. In Albania, they had their own institutions and Albanians are more secular there than the rest of the Albanians. Albanians were organized in clans, just like the English, the Scots and other peoples in the past, but when a state is formed the clans fall apart. There aren’t clans in Albania, there are citizens. If we come to feel Macedonia as our own state, where we have security and good career prospects, the large families will break up. If the government demonstrates a negative attitude to the Albanians, it will be paid back in disloyalty, and the family structures will allow the display of disloyalty to the state and the official institutions”. Question: “Where is the best preserved clan system of the Albanians to be found?” Answer: “In the period of considerable autonomy the clan system in Kosovo disintegrated. If it were present and functioning the mobilization against Milosevic and the Serbs would have been faster. When it became necessary, the clan system began regenerating, but that took some time. The family was the last bastion that did not surrender to the Serb repression. In the 1990s the resistance against the Serbs in Kosovo was put up by the families. During the Ottoman Empire we had clans and that ensured pretty good resources for uprisings and resistance. In Macedonia under the Ottoman Empire, there were no clans, while in Kosovo they did exist.”

This conclusion is more or less true, since during the Ottoman period the Albanians settled in Macedonia gradually, in the course of several centuries, often by way of separate nuclear families or individuals fleeing from vendetta. For the sake of the male offspring’s security and survival, they broke their ties with the larger *fis* in Albania or sought to get assimilated by means of marriages into another large family. In the tribal memory of a great number of Albanian families from the Bitola-Prespa Plain still living are precisely this type of stories about the reasons why they had migrated from Northern Albania to Macedonia /A.Zh./. Many centuries have past since then and, at different points and by force of various factors, the clan structure in Macedonia has revived too.

Political orientations, strategies and rivalries.

The events of the spring and summer of 2001 have left a deep imprint in the minds of all people in the Republic of Macedonia.

For the Albanians the war not only introduced the resolution of the Albanian national problem in Macedonia as part of the all-Albanian national question and made it the topic of the day, it was also a matter of *besa* /vow of honour/ fulfilled, an ancestral duty done. An NLA commander told us: “Everybody asks us if we’re going to launch an offensive this spring. We don’t really need it, because we have obtained what we wanted. Even if the Ohrid agreement is not implemented a 100 percent, should only 80 percent of it be realized, we’ll be content all right. It’s not in our interest any more to speak the language of war in Macedonia. In terms of history and memory we have also achieved what’s most important – the history books will have it written about us: “arms in hand they fought for freedom, independence and glory”, so we’ve done our duty to posterity.”

For the Macedonians the war crushed the prospects for a normal post-communist development of the young state. They feel defeated, deprived, and hopeless in every respect.

From a military point of view, the armed offensive conducted in the spring and summer of 2001 was of a limited nature. Some 1 200 combatants participated in the NLA military detachments, organized in 4 operative battalions and one military police battalion. Not in public, it is known that

there were another 800-1000 men from the KLA troops in Kosovo, which had refused to demilitarize. According to data from the NLA operational command staff, as many as 64 Albanians were killed in battle and 4 were missing, while the losses of the Macedonian army and police were 70 killed, about 400 wounded and 12 missing. Fifty of the Albanians casualties were NLA militants, and the rest of them – civilians.

According to Commandante V., the Albanian fighters did not seek to conquer territories, but to just show by force that they wanted a higher status for their community, to give the politicians the chance to lay higher claims and it is this particular manner of waging war – non-conquest seeking – that accounts for the limited losses and war damage.

During the hostilities approximately 100 000 persons had to abandon their permanent residence and become refugees. Today some 10 000 people, primarily ethnic Macedonians, still fear to return to their homes. Some of them would sell their houses in Tetovo and Gostivar and purchase homes in Skopje, Kavadarzi, Negotino, Gevgelia, Strumica.

Out of the control of the Macedonian police forces now are 19 villages in the Kumanovo municipality and 19 villages in the municipality of Tetovo and they function as independent Albanian communities. This makes the lives of Macedonians a nightmare - they cannot go back to their homes in the tumultuous areas controlled by the Albanians.

The Macedonians think the crisis has been provoked from outside – by the Great Powers and by the Albanians in Kosovo. They blame the Macedonian government for not having reacted adequately and resolutely from the beginning and for having allowed the conflict to grow more violent: “As long as the state demonstrated force, the Albanians were quiet.” The Association for the Protection of the Internally Displaced Persons and the World Macedonian Congress advance various initiatives for paving the way for the return and permanent settlement of the Macedonian population in the crisis regions. In addition to ensuring police protection, the patriots also suggest a number of benefits for the victims: exempting the Macedonians from paying taxes and electricity bills, governmental support for their children – kindergartens, schools, etc., as well as many other stimulating measures to prevent the emergence of new ethnically pure, Macedonian-free, communities in Macedonia.

The Ohrid Agreement. In Macedonia there are different and even entirely opposite opinions of the Ohrid agreement. For the ethnic Albanians this agreement is historic: “In Ohrid the way was paved for the settlement of the Albanian issue, which had been delayed for ten years. Had it not been for it, there would have been real danger of developments like those in Kosovo – the creation of parallel Albanian structures with all ensuing risks.” Many of the respondents are looking forward to the amnesty and praise the fact that “the agreement makes it possible for the ethnic Albanians, including former rebels and NLA militants to further integrate into the country’s political life.”

Giving it a philosophical interpretation, an ethnic Albanian leader sees the agreement in the following way: “A historic agreement is not only a legal act in which the two peoples would write down their claims and then come to peace. In a historical accord there is a psychological note implying that the peoples will mature and no longer be hostile to each other, which is disastrous. If we do not ripen psychologically, if we do not get rid of hatred, neither the Ohrid agreement, nor any other legal document of this kind will be good enough for us to live together. It’s most important to try to prevent in good time all manifestations of xenophobic mentality. If we fail to overcome xenophobia, the problems will become ever more complicated in spite of the Ohrid agreement.”

We shared our observations that many of the ethnic Albanian villages would not accept ethnically mixed police patrols insisting that they should be homogeneous, i.e. Albanian. We also expressed our opinion that on the other side of the old demarcation line (which in the years of World War II

used to divide Macedonia into western, Albanian-populated, part under Italian authority and eastern, Slav-populated, part under Bulgarian control) the ethnic Albanians lived (more and more) as in a de facto federated state, even though euphemistically termed self-government.

The ethnic Albanian politician offered his own interpretation: “We had war in Macedonia, because a people (the Albanian one) showed disloyalty to the state. This disloyalty was also demonstrated towards the Albanian political factors that had remained in the government structures and towards the Albanian population. The Macedonian political bloc has public institutions for enforcing its political will. The Albanian political bloc cannot implement its political will through the Macedonian state’s institutions, because we have been in a period of disloyalty to these institutions. There are two options now - the first one is to build up our own institutions, but they will be parallel ones and, therefore, destructive to society at large, and the second possibility is to enhance the confidence in the Albanian political factor as part of the whole”.

On the other hand, the comment of a high party functionary, a Macedonian, who explained to us that all the logistics during last year’s clashes came from Kosovo and the KLA, was categorical: “By all acts they seek to blackmail the Macedonian government, but we won’t allow the federalization of the country.”

Our question to the ethnic Albanian political leader: “You created the Consulting Coordinating Body of the Albanians by means of which you obviously aim at the homogenization of Albanians before the elections, and later too?” Response: “We created the Coordinating Body of the Albanian political elite wishing to increase public confidence in us. By it we mean to eliminate in elections all representatives who have no legitimacy with the Albanian community. At the same time, with that Body we are going to remedy the deficiency in the public institutions, on account of which we failed to impose our political will. The Coordinating Body represents all strata of Albanian society, comprising two members from each of the three Albanian political parties represented in Parliament, and three members from NLA’s political wing, 9 members in all.”

Opposed to the Ohrid agreement is the new militarized or paramilitary formation ANA /Albanian National Army/. In the opinion of the major Albanian political leaders, ANA is the creation of the Serbian and Macedonian secret services, which aim at revising the Ohrid accords. They wish to provoke new armed conflicts seeking to take revenge and restore the status quo. We asked almost all of our interviewees the question about the number of fighters in the new paramilitary force, and the figures we got in response were different, varying from 10-12 up to 70 men. A KLA commandant, a regular army officer who was hiding in one of the villages near Tetovo pending the amnesty, said: “The last thing the Macedonians can do in order to stop the implementation of the Ohrid agreements is to try to stage a new conflict and put the blame on the Albanians. For us a new escalation of the tension is absolutely unacceptable, because we have a lot of work to do and we need peace for that: we have to train 4 000 policemen, 3 500 soldiers, provide 18 000 persons with the necessary qualifications required to serve in the public administration. We need time in order to prepare the Albanians for all this”.

The Macedonian respondents, political analysts included, expressed the following opinion “ANA is a fundamentalist organization, not in a religious sense, but in the sense that it goes back to the original aims of the KLA and the NLA. What ANA is claiming now, was claimed a year ago by ANO and it is obviously only a link in a Pan-Albanian organization which is striving to create Greater Albania”.

The Macedonians’ views of the agreement are also divergent. There is a minor group, members of the political elite and some modern Western-oriented political scientists, who have their own positive conception of what happened in the spring and summer of last year, as well as of the Ohrid agreement itself. There is also the great majority of Macedonia’s political and intellectual elite, members of broad social strata, who reject this agreement, describing it as a disgraceful capitulation signed under pressure exerted by the Great Powers. The majority of the respondents

stated with bitterness and fear: “They did not seek a lasting solution of the crisis, but rather its delay in time, and everything that’s going to happen from now on will no doubt be harmful to the state and to us – Macedonians.”

A Western-oriented political scientist presented his theory to us: “One and the same thing invariably happened in Macedonia from 1991 to 1998 – we watched Dzhaferrri and Thaqi on the stage. Ali Ahmeti’s fight was against them, not against Macedonia. Until the Tetovo incident, the Albanians were peaceful, although Pristina had always been Jerusalem for them. I don’t think there was any radicalization of the Albanians, it was rather the weakness of the state system and the institutions. In a sense, it was an Albanian-Albanian argument, and in a broader sense – a Serbian-Albanian argument, but it was very cleverly transposed as an Albanian-Macedonian one. In fact, the Albanians didn’t want anything more than what they’d wanted during the previous 10 years”.

Question: “Yet, in what way do you see the prospects of these interethnic relations, the future of Macedonia?” Answer: “If the incidents recur, Macedonia will fall apart and will be divided between Serbia-Montenegro and Kosovo. No territories are going to be annexed to Bulgaria, because Greece will go mad. And you don’t really need either Albanians or Macedonians. We are de facto hostages of the Serbian-Albanian relations. The Albanians keep open every option, all to their advantage, because they know that without Belgrade’s consent there’ll be no independent Kosovo. The international community is waiting to see what price Belgrade will ask, in order to abandon Kosovo. But we are clear about it – the price is Macedonia. Both sides will ask territories for compensation, and the only territory available is Macedonia. To make things worse, not only are we hostages of the Serbian-Albanian relations, but also economically we’re in the hands of the Greeks –under the guise of privatization and investments, they are buying out everything fit and working for a mere song. They are not investing anything, of course – they buy, dismantle and export – nothing’s working in this country anymore. Besides, if we presume that Bulgaria has some deeply concealed and suppressed interests in us, I can conclude: Better be a dog, rather than a small people!”

We inquired about the role of the international community, because we had collected a lot of anti-Western and especially anti-American interviews: “Does the Macedonian state really feel under overt Western dictate? Some of your colleagues, political scientists, as well as other respondents from various walks of life, are already asserting too fatalistically that everything is beyond the decisions to be made by the national leaders and politicians. We are told that it is Pardew, Robertson and Solana who make the decisions in Macedonia?” Answer: “In Macedonia NATO has not engaged with only one of the sides, as was in Kosovo. Although there’ve certainly been elements of bias in favour of the Albanians. In fact, however, this time the West has helped us, because the Macedonian society persisted in its unwillingness to make amendments to the constitution and recognize the Albanians as equal in rights. But what would happen to us 20 years from now, when we become a minority in this country? Population projections are merciless in this respect. That’s why the international community provoked a minor conflict with limited casualties and damage, in order to impose the new model of a multiethnic state and thus guarantee a future, in a long term perspective, for the Macedonians too.”

The ordinary people in Macedonia, i.e. the predominant number of Macedonia’s citizens do not accept the Ohrid agreement and are eager for revenge. These sentiments are stronger in the central and eastern parts of Macedonia, where the Albanian population is less numerous and could therefore easily become the target of extremist acts of reprisal. Most of the respondents from these areas would answer to the questions related to the Albanians unwillingly, full of negative stereotypes and hostility: “We have few of them here and they live in more secluded villages, they are quiet and dare not rear their heads, because they’re in for trouble... It’s our land here...”

In Tetovo and Gostivar, where the Macedonians are in the minority and live in a quite densely populated Albanian environment, vengeful attitudes are weaker and formulated much more delicately at that. In the ethnically mixed areas, the century-old experience of co-existence has established certain rules and a complexly built system of daily-life tolerance towards the “other”, one implying greater restraint in terms of extremes. Skopje, which, as we mentioned above, is the official arena of confrontation, is full of graffiti with extremist appeals. Much less frequent are the graffiti with anti-Macedonian content, but what you can see in Tetovo is: “Be dead and gone, Macedonians!”

The state of the political system and social structure. Causes of the agony of the multiethnic state.

Retrospection. Before the Republic of Macedonia had seceded from the Yugoslavian Federation, the ethnic Albanians lived in the republic as a marginalized political entity. On the one hand, they were isolated from participation in the governmental structures at all levels by the ethnic majority and the Serb bureaucracy, on the other hand, they themselves maintained their isolation, as explained by the respondents, because “our fathers and grandfathers were not concerned with politics, with rights and freedoms”, or “the dictatorship did not care much about us, we were no account people for them”.

The absolute lack of political culture among the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia, and their non-involvement in any fragment of the political structure whatsoever, were confirmed by the ethnic Macedonian respondents as well: “Before the separation of Macedonia and Serbia the *Shkiptari* were peaceful and didn’t engage in politics. They attended to their own private businesses, to their families and their relatives abroad.”

Obviously, the ethnic Albanian minority in Macedonia perceived the political system in Yugoslavia and Yugoslavian Macedonia in particular as “alien, Serbo-Macedonian” and as “having nothing to do with us *Shkiptari*”. This deliberate alienation of the Macedonian Albanians from the political processes before 1990 was certainly motivated by their limited access to civil service offices in the public administration, where at that time all persons holding such positions enjoyed authority and power. The ethnic Albanians had also a limited access to serving in the police force, as commanding officers in the Yugoslav army, or to jobs in the state-owned hospitals, and the media.

Based on the 1982 statistical data that we obtained from some of the municipal authorities, it is possible to see in retrospection how the members of the Macedonian community were given preference in administrative and other prestigious municipal positions. For example, out of a total of 13 754 employed in the municipal administration in Tetovo, only 642 persons were ethnic Albanians. At that time, the population in Tetovo and the near-by villages comprised by the Tetovo municipality was ethnically composed of over 60 per cent Albanians. Again in 1982 in the Gostivar municipality, where 50 per cent of the population were ethnic Albanians, only 208 members of the Albanian community were employed in the municipal administration, bearing in mind that the number of those engaged in municipal administration was 2 146, of whom 1 722 Macedonians and 214 persons of other nationalities. In the Debar municipality, with a population of over 50 per cent ethnic Albanians, only 103 were appointed to jobs in the municipal administration, alongside with 407 Macedonians and 95 individuals of other nationality.

Under these circumstances, the life strategy alternatives open to the Albanian community assumed quite adequate forms: the Albanians turned to private business, trafficking, *shverts* included, private farming and cattle breeding, and employment abroad. Based on respondents’ accounts, it became clear that the family elders were those who allocated the main functions and roles among their male offspring: who of their sons had to leave the country to work in Europe or the United States in order to support all the family members, who of them had to join the shadow economy in

search of a higher income for their families, who had to complete their education somewhere abroad so that in each family they will have trained and educated professionals, etc. As early as the 1960s a permanent Albanian diaspora was established in Western Europe and the United States.

Thus, among the ethnic Albanians a minority of “integrated” persons, together with their families, was formed that was given access to some prestigious governmental posts mainly along the lines of the party apparatus or through collaboration with the secret services of former Yugoslavia. This group, in the words of a great part of the respondents, was ostracized by the “true *Shkiptari*”: “we didn’t need such traitors for kin, that is to say for marrying into the family”.

Quite many of the ethnic Albanian respondents explained that as a practical consequence of this situation their community had encapsulated for the second time (beyond their traditional conservatism and isolation) within their clan structures known as *fis*. A patrilineal family community composed of three to four generations, with a high level of internal solidarity, was formed and started functioning perfectly. Within the *fis* there is a strict, clear-cut age hierarchy, where the father’s, grandfather’s or uncles’ word is law and this distances the Albanian minority from the possibility of being transformed from the traditional tribal patriarchy into a political entity. Naturally, this is not due solely to the isolationist policy applied towards the ethnic Albanians in former Yugoslavia, but also to the age-old internal Albanian ethno-cultural mechanisms, which - to date and in every place in the world where Albanian communities live - contribute to the preservation of their traditions, of some elements of the *Kanun* and, above all, of their clan solidarity.

The importance of the *fis* has been preserved, among other things, owing to the high population growth of the community (the highest birthrate in Europe). The need to support and educate too many children has maintained high levels of solidarity among the family members: “In order to provide for so many children we should be united and help one another” is what an ethnic Albanian respondent said. Another interviewee added: “And what’s more, the Macedonian state took no care of our kids and they usually told us: as you make so many children, you yourselves take care of them ...”

Based on a great number of interviews with ethnic Albanians and with Macedonians who live close to them, we have put together the following general picture of the present-day political, economic and family organization among the Albanians: there is a direct link between the formation of a new well-off social class among the ethnic Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia and the building of a political entity among the Albanian minority. In both spheres the points of reference of this structuring lie in the organization of the *fis*’es. This organization has remained intact in spite of the new circumstances; only the range of activities in which the family members are engaged has been widened.

Each family has commonly one (or more) legally registered firms. Between 30 and 40 people can be employed in it depending on how many members of working age are in the family. Some of the activities are legal, others are not: “Usually the children and the women are occupied in farm work and housekeeping, while the men take care of the livestock, work in the office, keep the shop, or visit the cafés on business. The smarter ones are sent to toil in the “*shverts*”. Even nowadays each head of family sends several family members to work abroad, where certain specially established organizations take charge of them - such organizations exist in Switzerland, Germany, Italy, America... and also in Bulgaria, in Greece, and Albania. Some of them have legal employment, but recently many of them have been involved in the drug and arms trafficking rings, where quick and big money is made.”

The money received is sent to the family elders and, by general consent, the latter allocate the funds in a fair way, depending on current needs. Each member of the *fis* is obliged to pay all his income into the mutual family fund no matter in what place around the world he resides at that moment. During the past years, as a result of the families’ wish to get control over some key

activities in Macedonia's political life, a major part of the family funds has been allocated to the better education of some of the children and young people: "You can't have your own policy without being educated" is a refrain regularly repeated by the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia.

Family solidarity, irrespective of modernity setting in, requires that the principal postulates of the *Kanun* be observed. The majority of interviewees have discarded the observance of the *besa* and the vendetta. Yet, regardless of their social status, they would give no other answer to the question of whether they would seek retaliation for the death of a brother, father, uncle, etc., but this one: "Blood for blood, it's a must. Blood is thicker than water and it wants to be paid by blood alone."

However, this is precisely what the *Kanun* of Lek Dukaginja says in its paragraph 128 of book 10: "Blood is not paid for by a fine", § 916 reading: "Blood is blood, a fine is a fine", and § 917 specifying: "Blood is never lost"...

Among the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia only thin fragments of political orientation were developed in the times of Yugoslavia and most of them were connected with Kosovo, with the highly valued autonomy of Kosovo and the possibilities for some young people to be provided with university education and some kind of personal career development in Pristina, this city being regarded as the motherland in a larger measure than Albania itself and "where the Albanians manage everything and fulfill most of the leading functions". However, the authority-related culture of the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia, remains based on force, clan and family ties, and patrilineal hierarchy, where power is primarily a self-serving element of some other key social ties.

The processes of ethnic Albanians' emancipation within the framework of independent Macedonia. Formation of the Albanian political class and the prospects of the nation's development. With the democratization of the political life in the Republic of Macedonia, conditions have been created for the ethnic Albanians to form their own political structure by means of which to defend the interests of their community. Of particular significance for the political self-organization of the Albanians in this period were the "integrated" Albanians, especially those who ranked among the elders of their *fis*'es. Making use of the strictly respected *potestas* hierarchy within the families, where the elders' will is not subject to any comments or challenge, these elders were the first to succeed in building and registering their own parties.

Such are the Party of Democratic Prosperity and the People's Democratic Party. Based on an interviewee's account: "In the beginning of the democratic process, those *fis*'es that had representatives in the administration, which guaranteed them [access to] more information had greater influence. The first to come out on the political scene were those "integrated Albanians" who held power in the families, who had experience and were educated."

The radically-minded Albanians, however, very often expressed their reservations about the founding fathers of their political entity, being unable to forgive them their past of "integrated". For the Albanian community, terms like "integration" and "integrated" bear an extremely pejorative connotation. The radicals blame the old-time party leaders for having been connected with the "Yugoslav secret services and their repressive structures": "Their parties are shady. We, the young people do not trust them very much. We believe they have been created by the Serbs and the Macedonians in order to manipulate us. Even now they conspire with the former communists. ANO is something else, if it hadn't been for Ahmeti, we would have never reached the Ohrid agreement".

Albanians, guided by the *Kanun* and the law of honour, consider it their duty to respect people who have rendered services to the clan and the community as a whole. Therefore, in spite of the suspicions, the critical remarks and the discontent with the pioneers' political elite, the young Albanians do not deny their merits as leaders, or what they have done for the political "maturation" of the Albanian community, and this fact still ensures the clans' serious support for these parties and their leaders.

Certain tensions have been accumulated and they can be described as generational, among other things. The old political leaders assessed the NLA militants and the new leaders who formed the political wing as follows: “When the Italians controlled Western Macedonia during World War II, it was Greater Albania and from those times comes the phrase “tutto albanesi – tutto capitani...” Today we have 300 NLA commandants, but it’s not a professional or a conspiratorial army, they’re just ordinary boys whom I’ve known for years and who, all of a sudden, have become soldiers”.

After gaining legitimacy in the political life of Macedonia, the new leaders of the political wing of the disbanded NLA, angrily comment on ANA’s extremist claims and provocations: “They are 12-15 young guys, who wonder how to use up their energy. But Serbia’s and Macedonia’s security services took advantage of them. ANA is the creation of Ergon Berisha who is an army officer in Albania and who had served in the UDBA – the secret service of Yugoslavia. He has always worked against the Albanian interests – in Kosovo, and now here in Macedonia. He is in Switzerland now. ANA is the last hope of the Macedonians to spoil the Ohrid agreement”.

In a short-term perspective, it is perfectly clear, however, that very soon the three Albanian parties are going to lose their monopoly and will have to share the domain of power with the more radical formations that have emerged from among some new influential families or with support by the external Albanian political headquarters.

The upheaval in the Albanian political elites, as well as the covert contempt for the former “integrated” ethnic Albanians, is a topic often commented on by our respondents: “Those who under Tito were rich and influential owed it to the state, because the state gave them rewards and they served it. Now that they have to manage on their own, it turns out they cannot do it, they find it hard to cope, it’s not what they were used to. While we, who have been brought up to rely on ourselves, on our families and on private business, it’s all right for us now.”

The comments of the “integrated Albanians” themselves are in a similar vein: “At present, many families among the *Shkiptari* have grown rich, chiefly from the *shverts*. Not that we are complaining, but we earn our money in a decent way, you know, we don’t deal in drugs or engage in any illegal deeds. Such people shouldn’t be in politics and hold leading positions. Educated and honest people should go there.” Here follow the remarks made by Macedonian interviewees on the same subject: “Under Tito there were rich Albanians, but they were decent, learned people, they used to go to work abroad like we did. Now there are many newly rich families among them, but all comes from trafficking in drugs, arms, and women. They’ve become bandits and look what they’re doing.”

Political life in Macedonia is characterized by a specific attractiveness, since access to it is open to almost everyone - politicians, diplomats, the military, drug barons, individuals with criminal records, paramilitaries, journalists, and intelligence service staff. All of them feel as factors that can influence the destinies of entire ethnic communities and of the nations in this region, or possibly even of the Great Powers.

The Albanian factor in Macedonia’s political life, in spite of its heterogeneity resulting from political and familial fragmentation and economic rivalries, demonstrates a striking purposefulness and persistence in pursuing two goals: 1. An independent state in Kosovo which will an end to the process of formation of the national identity of the Albanian population in former Yugoslavia that has been going on for half a century already. 2. Through a combination of military, psychological, economic, and political acts to legitimize the Albanian population in the Republic of Macedonia as a nation-forming element with all the ensuing rights of representation in the public institutions and the use of the Albanian language in the administration, larger local self-government and even cantonization of the country. Albanians have declared quite unambiguously what their alternative will be, if they fail to achieve these goals: formation of parallel institutions to organize the secession of the Albanian communities and their annexation to Kosovo. At this point the Albanian

community in Macedonia is absolutely ready to resort to the implementation of either alternative any time.

The ideas of the incorporation of ethnic Albanians from Macedonia into Kosovo are not new and they have, from the Albanian point of view, sufficient and reasonable grounds. A significant percentage of the Albanians in Macedonia are of Kosovar origin. After the big earthquake in Macedonia /1963/ a large number of Kosovar Albanians arrived in Macedonia as construction workers and took part in the reconstruction of Skopje and the other cities. A significant number of them settled in the villages, or in the towns of Tetovo and Gostivar, and in the following years they called in their families as well. With the declaration of independence of Macedonia /1992/, a state border was drawn between Kosovo and Macedonia but it has never been accepted by the Albanians on both sides of the border. Since the establishment of the protectorate in Kosovo the majority of ethnic Albanians in Macedonia have cherished dreams of the political and economic unification of all Albanians who lived in former Yugoslavia in a single state with Pristina as the capital city, or possibly Prizren, in conformity with other Albanians' preferences based on historical and romantic feelings.

In his desire to explain the natural tie between Tetovo and Pristina in more comprehensible terms, an ethnic Albanian politician pointed out: "The psychological relationship between Pristina and Tetovo is the same as the one between Sofia and Plovdiv. Can you imagine a border dividing Sofia from Plovdiv. This is the precise reason why the Albanians would not recognize the border between Kosovo and Macedonia in the document endorsed in Belgrade and Skopje."

An ethnic Albanian political leader stated quite clearly that the first step in this direction had been made by raising the Albanian question in Macedonia and committing the Great Powers: "Last year's war had purely political, not military aims. We must look far ahead."

After September 11, the international conjuncture has drastically changed, the world community now condemning all terrorist methods including even those used in the name of national or liberation causes. Almost immediately and showing an extraordinary flexibility, the Albanian political factors adopted a strategy of restraint from engaging in warfare. Some things, however, cannot be brought back under control, as an ethnic Albanian respondent commented: "Aroused was the Albanians' martial spirit, fast asleep after Skanderbeg's death, a martial spirit woven into their genes. It's very difficult, when you have placed arms in the hands of Albanians, to try to take them back or control their use. It's simply one's second nature, which is as strong as the first one with us."

It should be taken into account that the major contingents for enlistment in the Albanian troops of ANO have been recruited from the mountain villages near Tetovo and Kumanovo. People in these village live in isolation, in a "wild" environment, following their own rules and laws and have not been used to living with the Macedonians. Once armed and driven to action, these belligerent highlanders will hardly be able to return to a peaceful life or to a life under control. When we inquired about the burning down and plundering of the Bektashi tekke in Tetovo, convinced in advance that this act of vandalism was committed by some angry members of certain Macedonian paramilitary or civilian structures, an interviewee, a dervish, explained: "It was done by our people /Albanians/ from the neighbouring villages inhabited by very primitive and illiterate people. Don't blame the people from the city – none of them has lifted a hand against the shrine, they wouldn't do such a thing".

It could be expected that people from these mountain villages would be used as a standing contingent for various extremist formations. From a minority, in a long-term-perspective, the ethnic Albanians in Macedonia expect to become the majority and these projections predetermine the lack of extremist territorial separatism among the ideological trends witnessed in the Albanian political elites: "Today we are in the minority only in the western and northern parts of Macedonia, but in 20 years' time all Macedonia will be ours."

One of the steady state system models, often exploited by the Albanian and Macedonian politicians, is described by the formula: “Macedonia – Switzerland in the Balkans”. Macedonians and Albanians, however, imply different meanings in their visions of the future. To the Albanians, this formula means not only economic prosperity, but, above all, cantonization of the country. One of the politicians’ major fears is that the population will not have patience to wait and see the implementation of this model, but pressed by poverty, or by the huge vigour and energy accumulated within the Albanian community, or else by the national ambitions, will look for more radical ways of development. Some of the Albanian politicians reported: “Hitherto, the events in the Balkans, and in Macedonia too, have shown that peaceful means are not the right mechanism for a rapid achievement of political goals, it’s only violent action that has proved to be an effective mechanism for achieving [our] goals.” The Albanians’ expectations for rapid changes, more rights, self-government, entering the economy at all levels, are too great. Delaying the fulfillment of their plans would inevitably lead to new radicalization.

In a romantic and sentimental note, the Macedonians remind us of the ideal of the VMRO dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, when the Macedonian activists dreamt of making Macedonia the Switzerland of the Balkans. Certainly, their ideas were much more different – they saw an inclusive, tolerant society that would unite all their fellow countrymen.

Conclusions:

1. The most important observation about Macedonia, as seen by us in 2002, an year following the armed conflict between the ethnic Albanians and the Macedonian security forces and eight months after the Ohrid peace agreement had been signed, is that: *The Macedonian society is utterly divided and alienated by ethnicity characteristics. In the ethnically mixed communities and areas there is a de facto absolute and quite strictly observed segregation – everywhere – in the shopping areas, in the dance halls and restaurants, in education, even in the cultural institutions.*

Tacitly, without mentioning the fact, there looms an imaginarily restored “Grupcin line”, the demarcation line which during World War II divided Macedonia into an Albanian part, under Italian authority, and a Slavic part, under Bulgarian authority. The part that was Albanian during the war, now, too, is characterized by an Albanian self-awareness and the psychological atmosphere there is positive, the people are happy, life is busy. And everybody is full of hope for a bright future of their community. On the other side, you can see tension, hopelessness, demoralization and thirst for retaliation.

Macedonia is practically federalized without this process being officially sanctioned and completed. The federalization and segregation have been brought to a more complete form in the consciousness and mentality of the two ethnic communities and things in this sphere are hardly remediable.

For one of the sides – the Albanians – the Ohrid agreement is complete victory and more than what they have expected, while for the other side – the Macedonians – it is utter defeat, capitulation, treachery, and grievance.

2. There exist strong contradictions within the Albanian communities based primarily on rivalry for leading positions. This rivalry, however, tends to assume the form of a political conflict of principles and at a certain point may have strong ideological and political reflections on the whole Albanian community in Macedonia: *Competing are two conceptions or ideologies if they can be described in this way:*

a) the secular-nationalistic one, which pleads for the strengthening of Albanianism through the modernization and Europeanization of Albanians, for transforming them into absolute equals of all Balkan, and why not European, nations, contains visible elements of national superiority and the feeling of supremacy over the “others”; b) the extremist one, charged with religious

*implications, which demands more and more chances for the Albanians – writing into the constitution, territories, ousting of the Macedonians, unification with the rest of the Albanians, and an active share in economic profits - lawful or unlawful. While seeking this goal the supporters of this ideology would resort to activating the most extreme forms of Islam in order to influence and mobilize the Albanians. When we asked: “Which tendency will prevail”?, the answer was: “Who acts faster/.” The second tendency embraces the philosophy that **through the Albanian nationalism the Albanians can turn into a regional power, and through Islam they can become integrated into the global world.***

3. Macedonian society is also psychologically overburdened with a dissatisfaction complex caused by the fact that the army and police forces performed very poorly during the armed clashes: *Military revanchism attitudes should not be underestimated.*

4. The philosophy of despair was formulated most concisely by a Macedonian political analyst who said: **Better be a dog, rather than a small nation!**

Witnessed among the great majority of the respondents are fatalistic attitudes which have taken roots and are expected to grow further; they believe there will be no Republic of Macedonia in the near future and keep pondering on who could shelter them – some of the people are planning their future in Bulgaria, others are looking for alternative opportunities in Europe.

5. Anti-American sentiments are very strong in Macedonia. Anti-West-European to a lesser degree: *Macedonians believe that everything is in the hands of the Great Powers rather than of the local politicians and statesmen and make efforts to be optimistic hoping for some good decisions in their favour by the European countries. Europe is their salvation from the United States and they are dreaming, though they do not believe it, that the US withdrawal from the Balkans will become a fact.*

Remarkably, anti-American attitudes are witnessed among the Albanians too, including NLA commanders and soldiers, the political elite, the clergy and the ordinary people. They are also convinced that things depend entirely on the United States and Europe, but their disappointment is due to the fact that the United States does not sympathize with their cause and their Albanian interest any longer after having gained solid positions in the Balkans, following its own interests, economic ones included. Albanians are convinced that their cause would be better defended if there is a change in the US administration.

6. The moral despair that characterizes the situation in Macedonia and Macedonian society becomes deeper because of the fact that the ruling party and its leaders are the unofficially recognized most corrupt politicians in the Balkans.